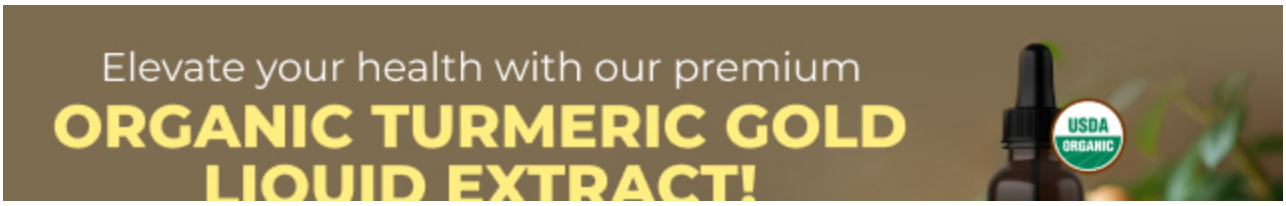

Big Food's deceptive new coalition aims to gut state food safety laws

11/03/2025 // Cassie B. // 690 Views

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- Major food corporations form a deceptive lobbying group to block state food safety laws.

- The group aims to replace strong state rules with a weaker, industry-friendly federal standard.
- Its advisors have histories of defending corporate interests like pesticides and tobacco.
- This strategy undermines recent state victories that banned harmful additives in food.
- The true goal is to protect profits by keeping consumers in the dark about toxic ingredients.

The world's largest ultraprocessed food corporations have formed a new lobbying group with a friendly name and a dangerous mission, disregarding human health to protect their profits.

Americans for Ingredient Transparency (AFIT), backed by Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestlé, General Mills, Kraft Heinz, and Tyson Foods, claims to champion consumer clarity while actively working to dismantle state-level food safety reforms. This coalition represents a direct assault on recent legislative victories that ban harmful additives in school lunches and require warning labels on toxic ingredients.

AFIT's strategy is straight from the corporate playbook: create a deceptively named front group to push for federal preemption of stronger state laws. The organization aims to replace hard-won state protections with a weaker, industry-friendly national standard that would centralize food safety decisions within the FDA, an agency with a long history of corporate capture and lax regulation.

The players behind the curtain

The coalition's senior advisors reveal its true allegiance to corporate interests. Julie Gunlock, director of the Independent Women's Forum, has a documented history of defending pesticides and partnering with Monsanto. She has dismissed concerns about glyphosate in food, claiming it poses no risk to consumers despite scientific evidence linking it to cancer. Gunlock even testified before an FDA committee arguing that Philip Morris' e-cigarettes benefit women.

Andy Koenig, AFIT's other senior advisor, is a founding partner of Kwinn Consulting, a Washington lobbying firm that helps clients shape legislation and influence public policy. Koenig previously served as special assistant to President Trump and has deep connections to Koch network operations, including Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce.

Undermining state progress

AFIT emerged following significant state-level victories for food safety. California now bans four harmful additives from all foods sold statewide. West Virginia is phasing out synthetic dyes from school meals ahead of a statewide ban. Texas requires warning labels on foods containing ingredients banned in other countries. These laws have forced food manufacturers to consider nationwide reformulations.

This is precisely what AFIT wants to stop. The group claims conflicting state laws “create confusion” and “limit choices” for consumers. In reality, food corporations want to avoid the logistical challenge and cost of complying with multiple state standards. A federal standard would likely be weaker and take years to implement, allowing dangerous additives to remain on the market indefinitely.

Consumer advocate Vani Hari captured the deception perfectly: “They just launched a new group posing as a consumer-advocacy campaign for ingredient transparency, but its real goal is to block states from banning food additives.” She added, “This name sure sounds nice on paper, which was very clever on their part—and goes hand in hand with their mission to pull the wool over the eyes of the American public.”

Scott Faber of the Environmental Working Group was even more direct: “Let’s be clear. This has nothing to do with transparency. This is about protecting corporate profits and keeping consumers in the dark about toxic chemicals in their food.”

A familiar corporate tactic

This approach mirrors previous industry efforts to undermine state consumer protections. When states moved to require GMO labeling, food corporations pushed through a federal law that eliminated state rights and created a watered-down national standard. The same strategy is now being deployed against ingredient safety reforms.

The creation of AFIT demonstrates how corporate interests use "astroturfing" (creating fake grassroots organizations) to advance their agendas. By funding groups with consumer-friendly names and deploying them to lobby for industry-friendly policies, corporations can influence legislation while maintaining the appearance of public support.

As state food safety laws continue to gain momentum, AFIT represents Big Food’s coordinated counterattack. The coalition aims to stop the progress that has already removed harmful additives from school meals and increased transparency for consumers. Their success would mean continued exposure to chemicals that other countries have banned for health reasons.

The battle over ingredient transparency ultimately comes down to who decides what ends up on your family’s dinner table: corporations focused on profits or consumers armed with accurate information. With AFIT, the food industry has made it clear that it prefers secrecy and weak standards over genuine transparency and safety.

Sources for this article include:

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FoodBabe.com

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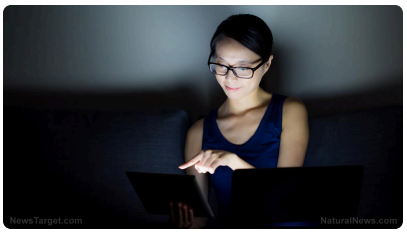

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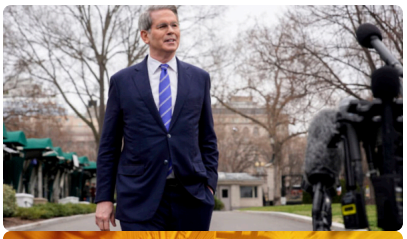

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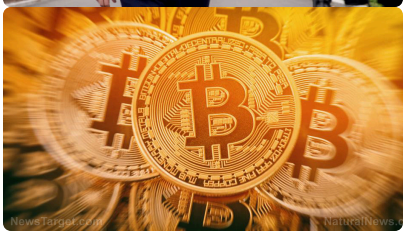

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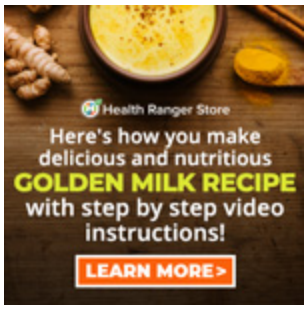

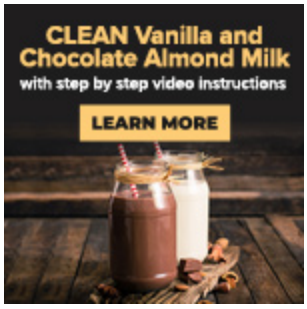

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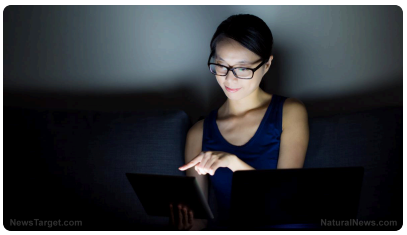

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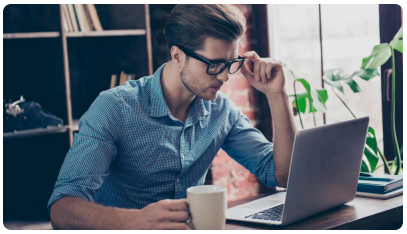

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